POETRY QUARTERLY

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL *page* 3

RICHARD EBERHART
The Preacher Sought to Find Out Acceptable Words 4

ALAN ROOK
What of Tomorrow, Soldier? 5

IAIN FLETCHER
Night-Fear (A Diptych) 6

KENNETH GEE
Elegy: for the Dead 7
Once in a Fable 8

KEIDRYCH RHYS
Room with a View 9

ERNST SIGLER
Letters to a Virtuoso 10

JULIAN SYMONS
Catterick Revisited page 11

SEÁN JENNETT
Five Fingers 12

EMANUEL LITVINOFF
I Sing You Darkness 13

NORMAN NICHOLSON
Song at the Turn of the Year 14

CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON
Poem 14

ALEX COMFORT
Psyche 16

LYNETTE ROBERTS
The Seasons 16

LOUIS ADEANE
Camden Town 18
Brush Shop, Wandsworth 18

DENISE LEVERTOFF
Poem 19

JACQUELINE STANLEY
A Child's Song 20

SUSANNE KNOWLES
Birth of Venus 20

PAUL POTTS
Preface 21

NICHOLAS MOORE
The Carrot and the Donkey 21

REVIEWS 26

Typography by Seán Jennett

EDITORIAL

Most periodicals are careful to number each issue continuously so that they can record the measure of their survival in the maximum numerals. Perhaps wrongly we have numbered the first of each volume number one. It will not therefore be obvious to our readers that this is the seventeenth number of POETRY QUARTERLY. Not bad going for a little magazine devoted to poetry alone. The honour is to our readers and subscribers who have faithfully supported us through difficult times. The value of little magazines has been pointed out in a recent PEN book. Their circulation is a minute fraction of that of the commercial periodical, but they alone are sensitive to the real as opposed to fake currents in contemporary literature. They only give space to a rising generation which cannot or will not associate itself with the hierarchies above them. Their pages are full of names which will make literary history, whereas in the sound commercial ventures will be found only those of jobbing journalists rolling their logs gaily along. If the unknown writer thinks he is going to break into the big racket he is wrong. Only the little mag. will give him a chance.

Suggestions have been made that, being the only regularly published periodical with a four-figure circulation printing contemporary work, we should increase the size of our format. It was reduced some years ago in the days when the paper shortage was more acute than it is today. People found it easy to put in the pocket. We feel it is not yet time to display the large white margin. In any case, our readers are not influenced by appearances. They read us for the value of the work they find in our pages.

Many of the advertisements in this issue are of American magazines. It is perhaps opportune to state that the interested British reader will not be able to get any of these magazines through any bookshop, and they will not be able to send any money to the U.S.A. for a subscription. The serious student of literature will find too often today that the book he wants is either out of print, published in America, or banned in both countries. This means that the reader of good books, who, for the intellectual life of a nation, is the only reader who matters, is debarred by a particularly obtuse form of censorship from the knowledge of the very good work which is being published across the Atlantic. A few publishers in this country issue books by American writers, it is true, but it would be very unwise to imagine that they are more than a very small fraction of what is being produced there. The pages of these magazines are more open to the work of English poets than the clique-ridden established journals of this country.

RICHARD EBERHART

The Preacher Sought to Find Out Acceptable Words

They drop with periodic regularity
From the summit of their goodness, young, to death.
They leap to the blue
And it is out of the blue
Comes Death the Enemy

Some young flier
When he least expected it slips,
Before he ever got into combat, in a training plane,
Before a backdrop of high-puffed, idealistic clouds,
Towering, still, complete, high, like all his dreams,
In luminous heat of sweaty Pensacola.

Closeness to machines going fast gives man brazenness,
Lags him back to brute-heart: who should be
Full of moral imperatives does what he is told,
Is cheerful, counts not the cost, gets in his licks.

The fine body needing no thought, working perfectly,
Has to be discounted, hands capable:
Least likely to do when
Seeing the superiority of the airman's eye
(Unsupplanted by scholarship)
Tools of justice high in the air!

One, to marry tomorrow, dead today,
Broaches the rude history of the world,
This descendant from the sky and man;

While we watched him pulsing with the others,
A painted ship upon a painted sky,
Diverted from swimming a moment when he dropped.

ALAN ROOK

What of Tomorrow, Soldier?

It is not necessary to contemplate defeat
when war is finished, and the evening settles.
It is not necessary to learn the taste of dying
when death himself has planted the seed in our mouth.

When war is over the sun will shed his branches
over our comrades knowledgable in defeat,
weaving a thoughtless columbine of dream
around the heart of those whom war has taken.

But what comes after?—after the branches fallen
from a heedless sun, here where the dead are lying,
each in his own green leaf, each with a harvest
of corn he has no leisure now to scatter?

What shall come after the din of conflict—
the meditations of saints, and the choirs of angels?
Meaning and power for the dead, peace for the dying,
and the possible harvest of the branching wheat?

Do not forget that the man who sleeps so deeply,
resting on his right side in that concealed corner,
carries the horrible memories of battle
and, in his skull, the terrible dream of power.

Never forget that the deadly load of captains
who have heard the savage secret of the guns
is the sad and hardening will to sleep, the thunderous
cry of the aching body to Death, its Lord.

Never forget that the dead are now within us,
asking no remission from the sentence death imposes.
Never forget the silent chain of history
where the past lies ever heavily upon us.

Remember that the subtle rain of morning
penetrates the sand to raise a mountain
or love heaped in the desert, and a hundred craters
honeycomb the pattern and chain of their enticement.

Our nerves have learnt to see history as a pattern,
not a sequence, but a pattern that enriches our fulfilment,
a pattern both binding and granting greater freedom,
liberating our forgotten joy in action.

For we have a journey still to be completed,
we travellers in time and history: our travelling,
though youth from our veins forever and strength is flowing
and springtime, is yet an increasing power of loving.

And only those on whom the hand of love
has silently rested, only those whom chains
of love bind to the living, only these
live deeply. These are forever happy.

The seeds of pain are with us all the summer,
but the flower of happiness, this is eternal,
a river of sunlight winding through our meadows
with rich currents and untrodden shores.

I sing not of the dead, but those whom war has chosen
to journey more slowly towards the act of dying.
I do not want to cover war's eyelids with my pennies
if tomorrow, perhaps, love shall come gliding down our river.

IAIN FLETCHER

Night-Fear (A Diptych)

I

Beyond that window there was nothing mild.
The trees made truthful, proselytes of winter,
Mimicked a child's graduated brow,

Thickened with thought's threads by union
With all those shapes, gentle as priests' hands,
Which are the inmost being of the tree.

A girl in some brown cotton dress,
And trains, a madness pastured on the night,
Tossed lights against his chastity of eye.

Still in their supple marriage with the dusk
He knew their feathery gestures, diving
For the wild duchies, dulcet to his dreams:

Where tree and train and girl
Are rigid in bewildered symmetry,
Never so hideously surcharged with ends.

II

There, no white gesture, comfort to the ear
Or pretence like a lisping mandolin.
The witch boughs in the winter falling

Moan like wry Judas at the jaundiced prime:
Tousle themselves in a cupidity of pattern.
There are so many lives and eyes the night

Gives him; but no purling hand
Wanders the air, arching about
Fear in the head.

O Figure I have angered in my hours,
Spiritual Horseman answering the angelus,
Visit him there, O visit that lost child:

Since all his hours are mine, I gather
From the joined fingers gentleness of death,
Pause for some search before the deeper night.

KENNETH GEE

Elegy: for the Dead

Earth is old, is gentle to receive;
Rivers run over, sands drift on your flesh.
Earth into once loved earth your bones are gone;
Under this moss of dead is ripeness born.

Falls of snow growing softly over your silent
Mouths, are beds for flowers springing from
Next year's thaw when all the waters flow
Down in songs of spring, when birds are home

And weather is a waking eloquence
To sway the sea and river into dances.
Lost to our seasons, deep in earth you sleep,
A time and world from us, our thought and living.

In this space, between our land where we
Still walk amazed by bird and tree and cloud,
And yours of death, space that is no man's country,
There must be more than memory and words.

May love be messenger between our worlds
And burn away all coldness from the heart
And bare the lie behind the secret eye;
So there may spring among the living love

At last, as flowers come from roots that long
Buried in winter's fallow months, give buds
That leap into the springtime's melting air;
So man at last may come over the mountain, singing.

Once in a Fable

The rain had come, the river was in flood;
The winter in the street would still the blood.

I saw them come from darkness under arches,
I knew the terrible silence of their marches:

A beggar with straws of misery in his beard,
A blinded cripple with a crystal tear.

A woman wound in red rags of a shawl
Wore meaner years within a narrow soul.

And on soft lips the madman spoke his evil
And laughed at sunless ruin and a revel.

A solitary at the river's edge
Hunted for riches in the mud and sedge:

In love with the reflections of the drowned,
The starving girl and guilty priest were found.

I saw them wandering, all fugitives
Driven and homeless as a drift of leaves.

There went the lost whose world was never wept,
A crowd of faces that had never slept.

And seeing these ghosts in the wind, the children ran:
We knew that once in a fable they were men.

KEIDRYCH RHYS

Room With a View

An oil-lamp flickers in my room of ashes;
A pair of rooks fly down the estuary;
Our dreams are more wroughtiron evening-washes
On poems that spell to me bad history.

So before the landscape folds itself away in shade
Where song-filled chapels fail each brilliant ode
And trippers come as refugees in caravan and shed
Let's plan our simple life, collect sticks in the wood.

What are our bootless cries past Castle, shell and shale
But triads for sandman cursing The Modern Age.
Humanity will always lick boots or drown in ale:
Go over seagrass, crablike, release canary in cage.

Walk like dog-gut postman, at best like an elm.
Know the museum scout for a dear old fool.
And crash through symbols as ill exciting school
Else newspaper lies, then, for these Celts' life-giving balm.

Llanstephan

ERNST SIGLER

Letters to a Virtuoso

I

Do you hear singing? Stand in the kerb, watch the procession
Pass, raise your hat in sight of the coffin.
Bearers with cautious faces concealing exertion,

Frosted eyes on the frame of emptiness; and sinister
The pall gently billowing in the wind,
The pendulum of footsteps. Singing? Still the child's voice?

Plunge in time to the abyss of memory:
In the wide tombs where the children lie
Waits, where you stand, no shadow. Follow the signpost's

Enigma. Look up to the wind laughing innocence at you
From the cherrytree and flowers
Onto all the children's faces, empowering their brittle

Fragility to counter the foibles of lost giants
Who in their spinster's garret hide
The barren ebbtime of the heart. Stand in the crowd, observe

How each calamitous gust passes among it
Glossing its cinema escape:
Shrill laughter of the washerwoman, the garish flag,

The crowned coach, O even the pall: I am happy,
I am happy, I am happy.
Stand. All at once the crowd is stamped into the ground, the bearers

Are earth again: but who still holds high the dead, who opposes
The wind so that there may be whiteness
Again, since the flowers are resurrected?

Who opens the pall that from the once dead heart may ascend
A new song to permeate the air
With amazing childhood: O who lives by the gift of your hand?

JULIAN SYMONS

Catterick Revisited

The grey stone of Yorkshire,
Small river running under
A bridge, road winding
Up to Richmond Castle,
The Methodist canteen and
Fried fish shops, the buses
That say *Somme* or *Kemmel*

And in the bus going
Back to camp the long low
Barracks, parade grounds,
Spread over miles the
Infection of war and
Always the soldiers,
Friendly or sad, their
Ill-fitting khaki,
And enforced community
Of concert and barrack-room

And later the pub
With dark northern beer,
The singing, the voices
Of friends, and confusion,
All, all the confusion
Of these wasted hours,
The dull face of war,
Slush on the roads
And the long walk home
Are now forgotten.
Yes the glasses are raised
And thoughts grow like flowers
From the mists in our heads,
From the flowers in our hands,
And the past and future,
The too-vivid past
And unfriendly future
Are forgotten, forgotten.

SEÀN JENNETT

Five Fingers

This pattern I have seen shaped from my hand
or that my finger scribbled in my blood
folds now away from my dictator plan:
even the leaf curls free from me, the sedge's blade.

Where once we made a market for men's minds,
each stall built on a common ground of peace,
some strong hand interferes: this faction quarrel
festers over, spreads throughout its spies.

Not mine this evil in the world's way—
I thought to have begun from what had been:
Time weaves a tapestry with living gut
and spins this future on the spindle bone.

Along the surface of this calcined crust,
under our tears, or in the air we suck,
this native curse has caught us to our end,
the fatal gesture of the weak and sick.

I lift my hand up to the glare of sun
and see the five bones and the interplay
of muscles: these my five fingers
mark me man, give me this special plea

that of their skilful and accustomed use
myself with others might have hammered out
the world we longed for: only you and I
have been too selfish to begin on it.

Now each lithe finger in the list of death
is marked out for its murder; and some other
is ringed with spirals of my circling blood:
this scarlet thread binds life and death together.

Ours now the ravished diagram of day
and evil night: this sky that screams of fear,
this heaving earth, this gape of fatal sea.
When will the phœnix trample from our fire.

EMANUEL LITVINOFF

I Sing You Darkness

I sing you darkness of ambitious men,
Making dim verses of the thriving cities
Grown to a quiet secret and an age
Of desolate and broken images.

I sing you how the wayward heart will turn
Older than sorrow to the tremulous morning;
How the wild rose and the blinding weed will grow
Under shadow of many feet.

For my song is all your grief
And all your simple prayers,
Having reached a blank wall of weeping
In your pilgrimage
And for atonement having spilt
The precious fluid of the heart's bright chalice.

I sing you no quiet breathing
Nor a calm sleep and a rustling tree,
But hunger after many memories,
The aching poverty of your pilgrim feet
And no cool water,
No comforting and humble hand.

And I sing the bad harvest,
Hills, rivers and patient fields
Hardened in revolt against the wrong
And pestilence of human will;
And how the lean years of emaciated sons
Reproach your ravenous centuries
Till you become young and penitent
To the forgiving radiance of the father.

NORMAN NICHOLSON

Song at the Turn of the Year

O I know, I know well they are there,
The indigenous fells, the blue steel
Scaffolding of Cumberland. O
No there is no need to look, no
Need to put down the book or rise from the chair
Wondering if still they are there.
Let the walls close in like a folded newspaper,
Let the roofs carry the type of the weather,
The scribbling of smoke, topical and trite;
Let the bare trunk of the sky be hidden
By clumsy topiary of cloud. There
They are, still and ever they are there.
And when the winter weather breaks like a plate,
And the wind winds through the cracks in the slate
Bland as honeysuckle in its green bow-ties,
When the spilling snow is rinsed from the screes,
At the time of the defiance of daffodils,
Then I shall go to the window, soon or late,
Knowing it is not the fells but I alone who wait.

CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON

Poem

I

Who once buckled to the white sand
the coral and the webs of intimate rock,
the caverns masked by the small breath
of bright ribbed fish and leaves of sound?

Here in winter the fabulous sermons
locked their hands to the stones, unlashed
all muscle into the unlucky winds,
fearing the reef and the friendless sky
broken like feathers and glass above them.

Who was the lucky first who
untied fruit from green summer
who unlocked love from immaculate winter?
Then in the islands the white cannonades
of birds who dragged to the shore their
small engines, unformed, imperfect.

Be kind, o my lord, in prayers to remember
the silent and the ignorant; those who watch
under roofs, buckled between life and death, who
wander all winter, unloved and unlucky.

II

Here on the embankment, two lovers are talking
plotting the complex course between ocean and ocean
leaving all winter loveless, reckoned alone
in terms of space and void. Alone
five syllables poised on the platform of my lips,
the white machines of flowers, the sea,
the images in porcelain; again
in dreams the body falling and
the hair blowing over the hillside
in the wind, like wheat.

I see the algebraic woman who is x + y,
her tongue locked in the hollows of her brain
and only the fingers that have any meaning.
I see the fall of the concise stars, and then
the geometric morning.

After the end, love has no voices.
Love is not given but taken, left
all long winter in the wind-washed archipelagos
until syllables balanced as engines turn
to the soft drums of heaven.

And why should the singing of birds
or the songs of a thousand birds
worry us both who love each other
Why should we be frightened by a song
we cannot understand or comprehend?

I call for the soft years of pink candles and white candles.
I call for the charmed declensions of love.
I call for smoking candles on the black coffin
and Agamemnon asleep as the convolutions of a fossil.

ALEX COMFORT

Psyche

The moon fills up its hollow bowl of milk,
bodies grow blue like pebbles in a stream
and light falls like a wind in summer stripping
girls into marble, showing their round limbs
moving but frozen, under the watery cloth:
tonight I watch her mask move into sleep
her breathing like a bee on a wood's floor
coming and going, to and from the light.

She is my field, and in her furrows run
my ways like rain, and the crops of her shadows
are pools, are a wild sea—and she has mountains
stranger than feathers, hard as fishes. There
fall in her hollows shadows of orchard trees
that follow the moon's circle like a tide
grassy nets that move on the dropped apples.

Body, white continent
on all whose beaches break the seas of years
this is the surf they say the dying hear.
We both are islands, and our grassy edge
creeps inwards, like the healing of a wound.
And the windy light is time, a limitless water,
a white sea lying restless as a hand

where no rock rests the gull, and no tree stands
ever, forever—moving, lifeless, alone.

LYNETTE ROBERTS

The Seasons

Spring which has its appeal in ghosts,
Youth, resurrection, cleansing of the soil
And in dormant roots already considered,
Stirs, with the sharpening of branches,
Challenges heart to do that which it cannot,
Sustain overwork, overthought, overlove.

It clears a path for hope: reinstates
Faith, which we had too easily omitted
With death, in the caustic months of the year.

Summer proclaims joy, laughter before its
Arrival: and deceives us into malice
With its non-appearance. It suggests
A romance that we have not received,
Sunny balconies in the mind: the seldom
Forgotten perfect island summer with its
Warm haze on flesh, flower, and hide:
The blossoming of their structure, fragrance
And appeal, from their own root recorded.

Autumn comes strutting in like a cockerel
Red, blue, yellow, and brown. It disintegrates
Our purpose of singular thought: destroys
Relationships: and cuts the sap of pride
Ruthlessly. Those who survive retain one heart
And voice. Yet autumn with contrawise motion
Shields the creative mind with covering of leaves,
Settles and matures the dormant growth which will
Reappear, under the hard skies of spring.

Winter exceeds the year with impunity:
Devours us of all greed: and freezes
That residue. It upholds that which is not:
Which is, the blaze of summer biting
Into our nature for a future reappeal.
Winter intones loss of all things:
Is the next step to death which is loneliness:
Comfort and warmth to be found around our own
Heart and grate, within the steel ribs of this age.

LOUIS ADEANE

Camden Town

Through their long aisles of night the white lights
[wait]
Powdered with pastel blue.
Cardboard toy box with snowy setting salt
Offers the falling snow.

Snow turns to ice and slipping grips
With tightened hands the walls.
Melts to an evil black and drips
Through rotten brick and tiles.

In the wet street the shoddy make-believe
Of shadowed people pales.
And from the corner the policeman watches
The laughing, aching girls.

Brush Shop, Wandsworth

The honeyed sunlight falls among
The delicate girders and the birds
Touches the walls and wheels with white
But does not reach the tightened wrists

Crouched behind bone and shrunken nerve
The blank unthinking look and act,
Stretched in the endless wish and dream
Under the shadowed bars of flesh

"We are the wronged, our deeds your crime.
You set the final mirror on
The glittering tower on which we stood."

The sunlight falls. The hands go on
Weaving the wire through the wood.
Weaving the wire through the wood.

DENISE LEVERTOFF

Poem

'Can we bring heaven nearer than a star,
Or lift the shadow from a world at war?'
N. MOORE.

I need a green fluidity of line,
the hills' long contours in my words, to tell
how by unwarranted grace I found this place.

I need the green astonishment of spring,
stillness of music in the mind, to give
the lie to darkness and release the lark.

The green of day assumes in dreams the shade
of eloquence I need, to tell how love
can lay the ghosts of childhood with a smile.

But the ancient lines of mountains break in craters,
destructive skies crack like decaying plaster;
the individual grace is out of place,

and history denies the structure of delight,
contemptuous of its tender vanity;
music refuses to ignore the black confusion of war.

For love must keep silence, remembering poverty's silence;
recalling the ghosts still living and enslaved,
must hide eternity away, and learn
that time engraves upon the prison wall
'spring' as the symbol of a bitter hope.

JACQUELINE STANLEY

A Child's Song

I nested in the barren limb
Blind to earth's joy and sorrow.
The mothering stream of burnt love
Battered on world.

His snake's blood ran to thin frost
As mine bled steadily to flame.
As a branch breathes on a blasted tree.
Feeding on wrack.

'Child of many moods,' they sang,
'Howl your winds in a barren land.
The pity-swept winds of your mutant hair.
Howl then, a child of unsatisfied desires.'

SUSANNE KNOWLES

Birth of Venus

Engrossed in the pore of squids and sardine-spawn
They went on hauling in their nets
Hauling without hurry against the early morning sea
While the sun caught the sweating backs of the young fishermen and
The old men's raincoat ego snagged with sinking fish-scales.
And as the young naked woman waded from the sea
And went up the Cannes beach stumbling a little,
Bewildered by the air
They gave her only half-concerned glances.
Not remarking the sea-shell clinging to her delicate wrist
Nor the fact that Italy casts no shadow.

PAUL POTTS

Preface

I'll take these words
And drop them in old wine
Till each hard line becomes
An argument in verse,
Manured into maturity
And nourished by long pain,
The only filling of an emptied life;
A poet's song,
Knighted to a dream,
A laughing carol,
A sonnet of the poor.

NICHOLAS MOORE

The Carrot and the Donkey

FOR CHARLES WREY GARDINER

I

We know what this performance means. We plan
To make out of an ageless world an ageless
Monument, and we see it in the glass,
The carrot hanging like a tear.

We are that clown who rides upon the donkey,
The motionless performer, the inimitable
Puppet with spots splashing his face, the card
Up his sleeve, the drink in his eye.

And yet he will never win? The wheel revolves,
Season of darts and mellow wistfulness,
When wizened wives cavil at dirty pots,
And the man—the hanging man—returns to beds

Colder than he imagined. There is only,
As in a prism, the moon's light waning thinly.

II

Perform? What is there to perform? We have
The landscape laid before us like a toy,
A Japanese garden, bridges, ponds, pagodas,
The little donkeys and the brightly-coloured
Men, the flowers, the trees. Yet in our joy
At minimising to this world of love
And incense what we know is cruel,
We wish still to go on. This is performance
In abstract.
There the moon gleams like a jewel
Over the pretty scene: the damsels dance
Before the splendid monarch of the night.
It is the child's dream that he will inherit
Such a deep beauty for his growing spirit
That he may drown there his perennial fright.

III

It is reality. The world we see,
The meadows with their horses and fat cows,
The little streets, the glittering shops, the houses
As mean and ugly as the people who

Live in them. This is real. And what we seek
Is like the donkey's carrot, long, and far
Away from us, yet something which we are
Forever moving towards, though when we speak

Of it we cannot say just what we mean.
It is a dream of those small gardens which
We kept in childhood, bright with indifferent pansies
Whose catlike faces rose to meet the touch

Of each of our childish hands. It is the bowl
In which the goldfish whisk their tails and roll.

IV

Return! What bed is colder than you imagine?
There are no beds too cold to lay you down,
As home from struggle wearily you come,
After the victory or the defeat

You have achieved at the day's hands. Your feet
Will lie like frogs under the cool white sheet,
And your hands will clench and fight
The suffocating night.

Yet there is one
Whom perhaps you trust, the faithful woman
Who alone shows tenderness to your weary
Head, who is fat and old, but bold
Against those blows which strike you, who

In a time when all is anathema is
Strong enough to support you with her eyes.

V

In the performance you are only a clown.
The other actors, central on the stage,
Out-act you every minute. When you frown
The crowds laugh; and, in temper, if you rage,
They find you funny. When your honest face
Portrays its sympathy they find it cold,
And, when you make your plea for passionate peace,
They turn away because you seem a child.

The very words you use are insufficient:
When you are serious, the wise men mock.
When you are gay, your humour seems to lack
The bright essential that might be efficient.
When you make love, the girl is like a stone,
Cold in a distant country of her own.

VI

The ageless moon is naked in the sky.
Minute by minute we who stand and watch
Grow colder in the January wind,
And fear the year that comes.

Will it be won
By us? We who in age grow older,
Have yet to find our monument. We know

Poets have spoken, fabulous the worlds
Laid out before us: yet, though we may try

A poor belief in fables, it is nothing.
We live in a real world where witches are
Extinct, and all love-charms unlucky.
Nothing we do can make amends for it,

The impulse that we follow willy-nilly
Into a dark and terrible, deep forest.

VII

Yet there is light. The sun is like a bell
Ringing the dancing children out of school.
The light dances on pavements and on housetops
And everywhere gleams shining on the lips
Of these people, your neighbours and your friends.
We have this hope. We have the eye that finds
The brightness on the hair, the dancing body
Gaily aware of its incredible beauty,
The mind that catches glints of sudden gold
In all the darkened corners of the world,
The heart that knows a certain peace is sure,
Though the road to it difficult, the journey far.
There is that vision. And in it we trust
Who, even though we wander, are not lost.

VIII

Yet he will never win! The donkey never
Achieves the tantalising carrot strung
Before his nose to make him go.
We know
Just what we wish, and yet we never have it!

O impossible terror! O gross,
Unfriendly world! Yet there is such a man,
Who, with the vision in his eye,
The girl at home, the child who grows to be

Like him, will stretch a hand to everyone!
And in that hand, pointing to that new land
That he can make, there is a sword of bronze
Which cleaves the air, and cuts away the thick

Mist which obscures there the transparent statue
Which is the future, carved, and looking at you.

IX

O to reach that point!
In the still glade
The statue stands; it is a girl who holds
The sword-point to her breast: she is as still
As the sword itself. It marks about her heart

That cold point where the mind alone
Reaches. The man, the other figure
Who holds the sword stiff in his hand,
Gazes upon the queer bronze of her hair,

And his lips speak, although no word
Passes between them.
And upon the scene
A sun shines blindingly, lighting each face
With an array of gold and shadow.

And as she moves to him, the young man moves
A little and the light shines on his face.

X

We have performed our act. Now it is done,
What new have we discovered? That we know
No more about our characters but move
Still blindly in the blinding light?

We do. And yet we know we move with love,
If we so wish to move. We have performed
Our own heroic action. We have been
As honest as we can. There is no world

But this world we inhabit, and we are
The creatures of our time. That ageless hope
To conquer age and time—it is illusion.
We live too deeply on our own desires.

Yet there is hope. We can perform enough,
If we can learn what truth can make us love.

REVIEWS

Edited by SYLVIA READ, *Here and Now* (2) (Favil Press, 3s.); LESLIE NORRIS, *Tongue of Beauty* (Favil Press, 1s.); FREDERICK B. WATT, Lt.-Comdr., R.C.N.V.R., *Who Dare to Live* (Macmillan, 5s.).

There has been an interval of several years between the first two numbers of *Here and Now;* one hopes that less time will elapse before the third is published: every little review helps at this time of literary boom, and *Here and Now* is by no means the worst. It was necessary to say this so that what criticisms I have of the present issue may not be misunderstood.

In her introduction Miss Read writes of *Here and Now* as having been produced 'by a group . . . made up of . . . poets and writers who believe . . . in the avoidance of the "artistic clique".' Which is nonsense. Why say you have formed a clique to end cliques, when all you mean is, you don't care where your contributions come from?

'*Here and Now* presents no creed or poetic faith'—this is a touchingly modest admission, but surely somewhat hard on the contributors? Indeed, only the last paragraph of the Introduction should be read.

The contributions: excellent poems by Norman Nicholson and Alex Comfort, and a group by Nicholas Moore; one of Mr. Treece's dreams, a mild argument between Clifford Bax and Francis King (whose poetry takes up a lot of space), three poems too many by Laurence Whistler, one too many by Herbert Palmer. The short stories are poor stuff: yes, Miss Read's too, even though she calls it ' a symphony in four movements'. May it be pointed out to Miss Read and the many others that grandiloquent titles do not bestow additional qualities on Lilliputian writings.

A new booklet in the 'Resurgam Younger Poets' series, from the same publishers, introduces a further wild Welshman, blowing his —sometimes—'impressive trumpet of words'. Often the call produced is not as clarion as all that: when one is drunk with words it is understandable if at times one babbles. Mr. Norris clearly loves poetry almost as much as the fact that he is writing it: his is 'the tongue of beauty', he is 'instructed by beauty', and it is all very beautiful, but just a little noisy. If one fails occasionally to see 'the wood of words over his heart' for the trees, there are compensations in the Dylanesque 'Sonnet in Winter' and the impressively pompous *pièce de résistance*, 'Poem in Ten Parts'. Mr. Norris will be more certain of his trumpet's register with his next book.

As my *pièce de résistance*, I can offer you Lt.-Comdr. Watts' poem of epic proportions, as the ads probably call it. It will brighten any dull day. It is the ideal present for your Aunt Matilda. You may look for reasons why this book should have been written: I have given you two, and there is a third—that the gallant Commander has successfully attempted to show what might result from a collaboration between Kipling during a hangover and Patience Strong—but is it wise, you will ask, to publish a parody on the Merchant Navy, even one as funny as this, at a time when its stock is so justifiably high? No matter: the gallant Commander is certain of at least my gratitude for lines which will shine like a beacon for me during many a dark winter's night:

> '*But I had answered, "Time enough*
> *When Hitler has run out his bluff.*
> *I want no heaven to regret*
> *Should all this brew of hell upset.*
> *I thought if I was hard and curt*
> *She wouldn't know how much it hurt . . .*
> *When Hitler proved with Danzig's fall,*
> *He was in earnest after all*".'

It may not be too easy to buy *Here and Now* and *Tongue of Beauty*—but you will find *Who Dare to Live*, scores of copies, at every bookstall.

ERNST SIGLER

ANNE RIDLER, *Nine Bright Shiners* (Faber & Faber, 6s. net); ANNE RIDLER, *Cain* (Nicholson & Watson (PL), 4s. 6d. net).

Since the days of Christina Rossetti—sweet dying swan of Pre-Raphaelitism—we have been somewhat rationed with women verse writers and stocked a line of grade two and three Sapphos. Until recent years we have been helped out by nymphomaniacal songsters à la Laurence Hope and busy little seamstresses stitching their daily platitudes. True, Edith Sitwell had a deft and pretty touch, but we felt clavier and harpsichord to be tinkling charmers of antiquity; wanted a music we could take out of the drawing-room.

Among two or three female figures in verse the poetry of Anne Ridler promises and achieves greater substantiality. She does not dwell in a few hardly sustained stanzas on a fragmentary and transient emotion with swooning obsession. She writes of the solid, the settled, the permanent: of love and marriage and birth; of the

seasons, sin and virtue. Over the specific facts of existence—the bits and pieces of phenomena which her imagery collects with fine-fingered zest—there arches the rainbow of belief, a religious pattern which interprets and orders a chaos of desperate miscellany. Variety is given a hierarchy.

This is Anne Ridler's third book of verse, the first having been published in 1939 by the Oxford University Press, and followed by a Poetry (London) pamphlet, the contents of which, save for one poem, are embodied in the present volume. Her writing since that time has undergone a great change. From the days of her first 'salted originalities'—a compost of long-sustained inversions, conceits and *rara avis* of poetic diction—a great clarification has taken place, producing a finely purified directness.

Her style has a functional variation of range. In description we find a sensuous precision:

> '*Early, the air's thin silky blue*
> *Only the finest sun lets through.*
> *While through the wide-meshed air of evening*
> *Pours the light of his coarsest shining*';

or in the lyric, emotional economy:

> '*The world revolves*
> *And is evil;*
> *God's image is*
> *Wormeaten by the devil.*'

Perhaps her most individual contribution is in the poems couched as letters where the writing has a kind of colloquial classical note. Its designating traits are a neat definitive phrase, an uncommon sensitive 'common-sense', a logic of argument and an even-tempered movement.

The world of Anne Ridler combines to a high degree the unusual polar opposites of freshness and maturity. She reflects in her verse a sense of grown-up-ness vitally preserved against the stale and the staid.

. . . . .

In his essay on 'The Possibility of a Poetic Drama', T. S. Eliot made a couple of statements in which two directions in verse writing for the stage were envisaged. 'Our problem,' he said, 'should be to take a form of entertainment and subject it to the process which should leave it a form of art. Perhaps the music-hall comedian is the best material.' Apart from 'Sweeney Agonistes', Eliot's contribution in actual drama has rather served to illustrate his second injunction, leaving Auden and Isherwood to expropriate

and transform the revue-stage in the name of literature. This second injunction ran as follows: 'The essential is to get upon the stage this precise statement of life which is at the same time a point of view, a world—a world which the author's mind has subjected to a complete process of simplification. The last word provides our present starting-point, and Anne Ridler's two-act verse-play *Cain* seems to realize this condition.

In her first book of verse she had observed that:

> '*In old Moralities could be included*
> *the entire structure of the world; we bound*
> *to audit for a less rich philosophy*
> *add meagre figures, note*
> *tentative conclusions.*'

Experience of life and the interpretative power of religion have clarified a universe of multiple quasi-ethics; confusion is reduced to a basic sin, and a drama made from a few simplicities. By this I do not imply the birth of a baby-faced naïveté in moral matters; a cancellation of all transitional states of mind where the intelligence and the will are making a choice of good or evil. (Cain's soliloquies argue a subtle conflicting mind.) A drama based on relative values must always vitiate its action with forethought or afterthought; the combat of opposites is swamped in the spirit of approximation, compromise, and reflection. The greatest tragedies have presupposed the Absolute; and in the tragedy of Cain God is the Absolute, the ethical pivot, the hub from which the spokes of virtue proceed.

The God of Anne Ridler's *Cain* is not the revenging Judaic divinity. The Hebrew story is given a Christian bent, and the two archangels who serve as a chorus point home a present lesson to the audience from legend.

The verse of the play is flexible to circumstance; its immediacy, its homely insistence, its care to keep the passions out of buskins and yet to seek expression for intense inner argument produce a diction which finds its place somewhere between the fine colloquial speech of J. D. C. Pellow's play 'World's End' and the higher eloquence of T. S. Eliot.

DEREK STANFORD

DAVID GASCOYNE, *Poems* 1937–42.

At a time when poetry pours off the presses as fast as the paper shortage will allow, it is a relief indeed to open a volume of poems which are technically and artistically far above the average. Unlike so many who rush, perhaps prematurely, into print, Mr. Gascoyne has waited two years before

publishing this book. I believe many of his contemporaries would do better to follow this example; the contemplation of their work over such a period would surely produce greater quality, even if the quantity were to suffer.

Those qualities, which were once taken for granted as a poet's equipment, are demonstrated in almost every poem in this volume. Emotion is controlled, as it should be, by the self-imposed discipline of the artist, and never spills over into a mawkish torrent of rhetoric; nor is it squandered in trite rhymes, or sensational effects. With one exception there is no instance among these poems of 'free-verse' being allowed to degenerate into prose. There is always a fine command of the line, of interior rhymes, assonance; a sense of rhythm which binds the verse together. All that he writes is intelligible without even approaching the commonplace; and he expresses himself with more effect than those who resort to a startling syntax or an obscure symbolism in order, very often, to mask their mediocity. Both the tritely-academic and the fake-romantic, who are only too common, compare very unfavourably with Mr. Gascoyne's sincere poetical eloquence.

His book is divided into five groups of poems: Religious, Metaphysical, Elegaic, Personal, Time and Place. The classification is only an approximate one, as the poems in the present volume were originally intended to form two separate volumes, 'The Open Tomb' and the 'Conquest of Defeat'. Mr. Gascoyne's philosophy as represented in the present volume is well illustrated by these two rejected titles (which would hardly have embraced the Elegaic and some of the Personal poems). Around us lies the open tomb of the past, despair haunts the present, and the future is indiscernible. The poet has run through the gamut of despair, and has embraced it, using it as a fortification against what may come. As he does not give way to a morbid interest in the corpse, so he is not captured by alluring hope:

> '*Man's eyes, unmoving, lit by their desire*
> *To see* the worst, *and yet not die*
> *Of their lucid despair*
> *But in such vision persevere*
> *Through time into Eternity.*' (p. 49)

> '. . . *I must learn*
> *The revelation of despair, and find*
> *Among the debris of all certainties*
> *The hardest stone on which to found*
> *Altar and shelter for Eternity.*' (p. 4)

'*Not from a monstrance silver-wrought*
But from the tree of human pain
Redeem our sterile misery,
Christ of Revolution and of Poetry,
That man's long journey through the night
May not have been in vain.' (p. 7)

'*. . . lamentation and defeat and pain*
Are all transfigured by acceptance.' (p. 54)

Through acceptance, the conquest of defeat can be assured, the will to persevere made unbreakable:

. . . if my despair
Is strong enough, my spirit truly hard,
No wall shall break my will: to persevere (p. 11)

It is a sign of intellectual honesty, rare among most of us, to hold fast, among the debris of all certainties, to the necessity of *belief*, as opposed to *hope*.

The Elegaic poems are a sequence, written in French, to the memory of the composer, Alban Berg. *Tenebroso* is one of the finest poems in the book, especially the memorable and evocative second verse:

'*Et au-dessûs du chaos des grandes villes*
Qui gonfle le continent, la noirceur des cieux pèse
Comme un jugement sur toutes les mes-prisons
Où rodent encore les peurs de l'ancienne nuit
Avec des uniformes, des bâtons, des fusils, . . . (p. 26)

Among the personal poems is the 'Elegy' in memory of R. R. (1916-41). In effect this elegy is applicable, in its psychological understanding, to a generation of *déclassé* intellectuals who

'*Cased in the careful armour that* [*they*] *wore*
Of wit and nonchalance, . . .
. . . waited daily for the sky to fall;' (p. 38)

Among the religious poems 'Ecce Homo' is outstanding. Its subject, the Christ of Revolution and of Poetry, has been treated a hundred times recently, each attempt as indifferent as its predecessor. Here, for once, it stands on its own, a small monument to sincerity and poetic feeling unencumbered by that fatal desire to preach.

This is not only a book of poems which I have appreciated more than any single collection of a contemporary poet since George Barber's *Lament and Triumph*, but also a surprisingly luxurious example of wartime book production. Graeme Sutherland's drawing and the design of the book as a whole constitute a production which would have been remarkably handsome even in pre-war days.

MARK HOLLOWAY

MARGARET SACKVILLE, *Return to Song* (Williams & Norgate, 1s. 6d.); CLIVE SANSOM, *The Unfailing Spring* (The Favil Press, 2s.); JOHN HEATH-STUBBS, *Beauty and the Beast* (Routledge, 5s.); SYDNEY KEYES, *The Cruel Solistice* (Routledge, 5s.); JULIAN SYMONS, *The Second Man* (Routledge, 5s.).

The first three books are traditional in form and outlook. The name-poem in *Return to Song* is an invitation to the writer's muse:

> '*Dare I believe*
> *That from so numb,*
> *So parched a source*
> *New streams may come?*'

However, the muse thus invoked has not played up, for I can find no grounds for an affirmative answer in any of Lady Sackville's verses. The images creak with over-use, and little of her work shows any recognition of a world peopled by living, hoping, suffering human beings.

Despite the glowing introductory commendations of Mr. Walter de la Mare, I cannot find much evidence of real creative energy in *The Unfailing Spring*. Perhaps the best thing in the book is a sonnet, 'After Ronsard,' which begins:

> '*When you are old, and spinning quietly*
> *By fire- and candle-light at close of day,*
> *You'll read my verses and with wonder say:*
> "*Ronsard, when I was lovely, sang of me*".'

But that sort of free translation has already been well done many times. Some of the other poems have a certain china charm: but the wine is often flat, the poetry in the vessel lost in conventional sediment.

John Heath-Stubbs is by far and away the richest of the traditionalists in this group. He is at his best in poems which imagine the thoughts and words of historical characters—'Leperello,' 'Edward the Confessor,' and perhaps best of all, 'An Heroic Epistle, from William Congreve to Anne Bracegirdle (*circa* 1729),' which contains the traditionalist's cry:

> '*And now we live in a rounded time, rounded*
> *With a low horizon of feeling, until men break it.*
> *We have forgotten the old high ways of loving,*
> *And the song's poise is gone.*'

The horizon is higher in the late Sydney Keyes' *The Cruel Solistice*, than in any of these traditionalists' verse. There is a delicate music which is refreshing, and a care for phrasing which is attractive. His recent death, in Tunisia, has deprived England of a poet who might have done greater things. I think that the high-light of the book is a poem, 'Timoshenko':

> '*He turned, and his great shadow on the wall*
> *Swayed like a tree. His eyes grew cold as lead.*
> *Then, in a rage of love and grief and pity*
> *He made the pencilled map alive with war.*'

Aiblins the most interesting book of the five is *The Second Man*, by Julian Symons. He is still the intellectual observer come unstuck. He offers no solution to the great and small human failings which he draws with a hard-pencil-like precision. Personal love is the nearest he gets to an answer, in a poem 'For My Wife':

> '*And in the future that we move towards, I trust*
> *That whatever fails at least this may survive*
> *As compensation for our end of dust,*
> *This love that is alive*
> *And vivid in a world of falsehood,*
> *That, where so much is doubtful, certainly is good.*'

There is not much music in Mr. Symons' verse. To some extent he compensates by delivering satisfyingly devastating thrusts at bourgeois values:

> '*Things move quickly always. Events catch us up.*
> *I am caught up suddenly by nineteen-thirty,*
> *My old cricket teacher. Tapping me on the shoulder*
> *Insistently he says: "I am disappointed in you.*
> *You have not turned out as I expected. You are a poet.*
> *Where is the boy I taught to bowl leg breaks?"* '

Even if you feel that the singing hirples a bit, this book is worth buying. Mr. Symons is very good value for the money, especially if you are a cloak-and-dagger anarchist and can thrill at his mysterious references to back-stair knockings!

MAURICE LINDSAY.

RANDALL JARRELL, *Blood for a Stranger* (Harcourt, Brace, $2); JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN, *The Garden is Political* (MacMillan, $1.75); MEYER LIBEN, PAUL GOODMAN and EDOUARD RODITI, *Pieces of Three* (The 5 × 8 Press, Harrington Park, N.J., 35c.); PAUL GOODMAN, *Stop-Light* (The 5 × 8 Press. $2); KARL SHAPIRO, *Person, Place and Thing* (Secker & Warburg, 6s.).

Randall Jarrell is an intelligent and persuasive young American poet; but somehow his bark is more effective than his bite. His writing has all the facets of brilliance, but when you get there you feel that after all perhaps the cupboard is really rather bare: that he has plenty of interesting ways of saying things, but not really very much to say. Yet he is undoubtedly brilliant; brilliance, however, in itself is not always a matter for congratulation. Mr. Jarrell is often smart in the manner of W. H. Auden or, occasionally, of William Empson, but one feels that after all this smartness is no more appropriate than the sight of one woman in another woman's clothes; the effect is intriguing, but unsatisfactory. Somehow the defects of Auden and Empson are what Mr. Jarrell has most easily assimilated. In 'A Poem for Someone Killed in Spain' the phrase 'joy suffuses with its blood the difficult fields' strikes one as merely smart, and an inappropriate smartness. Yes, it is true, but cheap —that is a feeling one gets with Auden at times, and with Mr. Jarrell frequently. He is very intelligent, but he uses his intelligence smartly rather than profoundly; his use of other poets is clever but not deep; he is like a good talker who has assimilated a great deal of experience superficially, who has a lot of interesting and exciting things to say and holds his audience; yet, when you get back home and consider what he has really said it comes to very little. However, a superficial brilliance is better than no brilliance at all. His poems are interesting, if not good—and some are quite good compared to contemporary British standards. He is a serious and intelligent poet, and the depth his poems now lack may not always be lacking in his work. It is his weakness that he is intelligent

enough to see what he wants to take from contemporary poets, yet too superficial to assimilate it. However, in this respect he is not nearly as bad as many contemporary poets in this country, and his work is more interesting than many: intelligence *is* something, if not everything. It is what many poets of promise singularly lack; they would do well to buy, and learn from, this book. Modern American poetry is not anything like as bad as those who have seldom read it would like us to believe. It can teach us plenty.

The Garden is Political must be one of the best first books ever published. Mr. Brinnin, although he was only twenty-five when this book was published, writes like a mature poet. His imagery is not, like Mr. Jarrell's, diffuse and over-effusive. His style is controlled and formal. If he owes something to Yeats, he nevertheless never lets it swamp his own individuality. What he lacks in range he makes up in technique. Where Mr. Jarrell seems garrulous and over-confident, Mr. Brinnin is assured and composed. But he is not therefore unexciting. In 'The Transatlantic Heart' he writes:

> '*Pontifical and like a giant gull,*
> *Wherefore I think that it is beautiful,*
> *The clipper sits upon September water.*
> *From a crowded, glass-walled bar I watch it waver*
> *On the adolescent seas and when I turn*
> *Towards music, clever liquor, or to mourn*
> *In quiet wonderment a personal love,*
> *I would be classified as wing on wave.*'

And this gives you a taste of his quality: but his goodness rests not only in his assured verbal technique and his power of phrase, but yet more impressively in the organic structure of his poems: by which I mean that they move from point to point to a conclusion: they are not, as are so many poems by young or unskilful writers, merely statements of objects or moods, uncompleted and unfinished. They, so to speak, move onwards.

The 5 × 8 Press does good work in printing cheaply the work of some of the most promising younger American poets. The most interesting of those in *Pieces of Three* is Paul Goodman, whose poem, 'Saint Cecilia's Day: 1941,' is remarkable, as is most of his work. *Stop-Light* is a volume of five dance-poems or Noh-plays, with an extremely good short essay on the Noh-play. He himself has adapted the form to his own uses—though he departs from it in certain respects, he keeps very close to the original idea and the original formal group of characters, and yet contrives to make something thoroughly modern of it. Mr. Goodman writes prose.

too, and always, whatever he writes, shows an intense and expert interest in form and formal devices: and by this I do not mean a superficial interest in mere technical tricks. He is certainly worth watching. His experiments are not always entirely successful, yet because they are based on classical forms, or on variations of known forms, they have the merit of always being interesting—for his intelligence is acute and his knowledge is deep. I think his Noh-plays are, in that form, entirely successful. Those who can by hook or by crook obtain this book should do so—and that goes for most of Mr. Goodman's work, though it may not all be as entirely successful as these dance-poems are.

Karl Shapiro is the new young hope of America, the blue-eyed boy of the pundits: Miss Bogan says he's good, Mark Van Doren says he's good, and even Allen Tate, who has such a low opinion of the younger generation, is seduced by Mr. Shapiro. But I can't see that he's as good as all that. He doesn't seem to me to have anything that Messrs. Jarrell and Brunin haven't got, except that he's slicker, far slicker. Even so, he is crudely slick, and it is not nearly so effective, nor so slick in fact, as MacNeice's refined cynicism. His book begins well. 'Scyros' is funny and sharply written, but Allen Tate does this sort of thing better, though which one started first I don't know. 'Necropolis' is slick enough, in the familiar post-Auden manner—and talking of influences, Jarrell at least has many, whereas in most of Shapiro's poems Auden or the ghostly post-Auden manner sticks out a mile—and there are others which are very neat. But neatness is not all. Nor is fun. Mr. Shapiro, when funny, may seem healthier than MacNeice or Gavin Ewart, but he is not so good. He is even colder. And when he is being serious, he has even less to be said for him. 'The Dome of Sunday' seems to be the best poem in the book; for once he seems to have a little more than usual to say, a little more genuine feeling. Elsewhere we come across this sort of thing. Oh, all the dear old phrases!

> *'I heard one say, "Her gift was to be seen,*
> *And poor. With sometimes spastic hate could foil*
> *Her sister's husband and her mother's ulcer.*
> *Called for in sealed and guarded cars could flee*
>
> *Like wit across theatrical frontiers."'*

It has a familiar ring, has it not? But I don't want to appear too derogatory. Secker & Warburg should be congratulated on having

the courage to publish a young American poet, though I can't congratulate them on their choice. It's too obvious. Jarrell or Brinnin would have been better, they are more lively, more original, or, better, still, William Abrahams, Dunstan Thompson, or Harry Brown, or even the wild and woolly Patchen. And there are others, too, than whom Mr. Shapiro is no better: but, as I said before, he's the new blue-eyed boy.

NICHOLAS MOORE

POPULARIZING POETRY

The Augustan Poets, Various (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 9d.); MARIE STOPES, *Instead of Tears* (Count Potocki, Little Bookham, Surrey, 6d.); JON WHITE, *Dragon and other Poems* (The Fortune Press, 4s. 6d.).

Noboby, so far, has succeeded in gauging the reading public's taste *accurately* at any particular time—the Leavises for instance were as completely at sea as Earl Baldwin, or Mr. Baldwin as he was then. And it is almost certain in these years of the near-institutionalizing of the Arts that the bigger commercial publishers, anyway, would never dream of employing 'Market Research—thank God! But if they had some such means at their disposal, some of them might be shocked to discover that, alongside the new Jazz-cult, there really existed quite a demand *now* for—Poetry—and the better stuff at that. Why this plague of poets? The reason is: the war! Here, until quite recently, poetry was merely tolerated as an eccentricity of otherwise respectable citizens. (This is on good authority.) In July, 1936, Mr. Baldwin, addressing the Congress of the Universities of the British Empire at Cambridge, asked for—*more poets!* Like the typical Englishman he was, he, naturally, never dreamt of doing anything to *encourage* them. He simply expected poets galore to spring up everywhere—in Granchester and in Adlestrop, and (let us hope) in the square at Bewdley! at his bidding, after that. No need to provide some sort of Baldwinesque Court for them. Nothing about the right of the piper to call his own tune. For our democratic government's attitude towards Literature and the Arts must always be a most *uncreative* one. Although Earl Baldwin thought poets were scarcer than scientific men then, he at the same time pleaded for the endow-

ment of chemists, engineers, research workers—for the destruction of mankind—so that these should be free to exercise their talents! Robert Gráves explodes all this Baldwinesque piece of humbug excellently in *Epilogue: A Critical Summary* (Volume III). Can one now believe that Mr. Asquith once secured a Civil List pension for Walter de la Mare, which enabled him to devote all his efforts to writing? Perhaps it is significant enough that the handsome King's Medal, awarded to a poet under the age of thirty by the Poet Laureate and his Committee, has only been awarded twice: in 1934 to Laurence Whistler; in 1937 to W. H. Auden (horrible mistake!)?

But war booms not only patriotism but poetry. The Government departments and ministries are still pretty philistine, it's true, and are nearly all outposts of Fleet Street. But a lot can be done within the existing framework—P.E.N. Club circularizing, C.E.M.A., B.B.C., Æolian and Wigmore Hall Readings, as Osbert Sitwell and public-spirited women like Lady Cripps, Lady Bonham-Carter and Mrs. Dudley Short have shown. And if the Editor of *Poetry* (London) wasn't such a hopeless dreary Meary when it comes to organizing, the younger poets would have had some sort of show last year. Rest assured, they are having a very lean time of it just now, even if poetry is on the up-grade. It is partly their own fault and partly the Government's for not using them. We have no patronage, no John Simon Guggenheim Foundation fellowships, no Federal Arts Project. Instead, we have Agate, who gives big, fat, unfriendly reviews, and offers a five-bob prize for a football-ballad the next week.

Came the war. At its beginning hundreds of men were stirred more deeply and less selfishly than ever before. They felt noble. It was perhaps only natural that they were moved to distill their excess emotion into something resembling poetry, churning out reams of stuff—bad, indifferent and mostly god-awful. They were readily printed. They got a kick out of it though their work was fairly valueless—to others. But at least they woke up the publishers.

After costing to a hair—so as to reach, say, a ceiling of 25,000 to 50,000 copies (quite possibly it's more)—a publisher probably would find that a series of contemporary poetry booklets aimed at reaching their maximum potential audience couldn't be done under ninepence. In 1925—when poetry apparently was a drug on the market—Douglas Jerrold and Victor Gollancz, now great publishers, and then both directors of Benn's, launched a sixpenny series, belatedly named *The Augustan Poets*, under the editorship

of Edward Thompson. They sold well over 1,000,000 copies! So we see that the problem of popularizing poetry is largely technical—a job for a great editor with a knowledge of book production, typography, and the rest (here I might add that Faber's Sesame series do show more knowledge of typography, colour of paper, the right sort of ink, etc.). Now the Augustans have been resurrected by Mr. Jerrold under 'E. T.', the original editor, I presume, who writes a truthful and illuminating 'General Preface to The Augustan Poets' as an introduction to the Rupert Brooke volume, whose inclusion in the middle twenties, incidentally, assured the early success of this long-term publishing venture. In the preface we learn how they came to be called Augustan, just before the machining off, besides much about the ways of poets, who can be the world's worst snobs. Besides Brooke, the other selections now published are Robert Bridges, Robert Graves, Hilaire Belloc, Siegfried Sassoon, 'A Religious Anthology' (suggested by Norman Ault and interesting to compare with Norman Nicholson's recent Penguin one), Robert Vansittart (Persian light poetry praised by T. E. Lawrence, not his *Sunday Times* stuff), and Cecil Day Lewis. 'Copyright' and other series, such as Faber's Sesame, probably account for the other obvious omissions. But now we have such a remarkably good flourishing of younger poets writing healthily—a poetic renaissance England hasn't enjoyed for decades—here surely is a chance for Messrs. Jerrold and Thompson to do something towards helping a few of the more serious poets of the younger generation. I see no reason for the average publisher to fight shy of good modern verse, especially when there is no fear of a dwindling audience. Let our publishers remember the case of Edward Moxon.

Dr. Stopes' new poem is cheaper than *Oriri* and *Lovesongs for Young Lovers* (why not give the gal a free advert?); the late Laurence Binyon found it 'glowing'. G.B.S. commented on an earlier work that 'it produced an impersonality that is new in love poems'. Who am I to quibble? For Dr. Stopes' 'new' stanzas *have* found favour with the editorial minds behind *Life and Letters Today* and *Kingdom Come*. No ragging! The most notable poems of Jon White's are his Welsh translations after Hywel ab Owain, a eleventh century Prince of Gwynedd, and a few topographical pieces written at Cardiff, Nant-Ffrancon, Conway, Caernarvon, Harlech, Moel Hebog during a walking tour apparently, judging by the dates. He seems a pleasant and modest young man and I am glad to possess a copy of his juvenilia. Whereas Dr. Stopes writes: 'Ah! Bill, you have escaped life's bitterest griefs,' Mr. White, in his lines to Nicholas Moore (at Cambridge), sings:

'I think with shame
how the green voices in your tree of song
have stayed the hungry dark when mine were dumb. . . .'

O innocence!

KEIDRYCH RHYS

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